

Hope and the Future: Andrew D. Lester's Perspective

"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." — Jeremiah 29:11 (NIV)

1. Introduction to Lester's View

Andrew D. Lester, a pastoral theologian and counselor, emphasized the critical role hope plays in human flourishing. In his book, *Hope in Pastoral Care and Counseling*, Lester lamented that both pastoral theology and behavioral sciences have often neglected the deeper human struggle of 'futurelessness' — the loss of a meaningful future story.

2. Hope as Future-Driven

Lester described hope as a force rooted in the past and lived out in the present, yet energized by the future. In his words: "Hope, although rooted in the past and acted out in the present, receives its energy from the future." This future-orientation makes hope resilient even when current circumstances are painful.

3. The Narrative Dimension of Hope

Lester introduced the idea of the 'future story' — the personal narrative we carry about what lies ahead. When despair or trauma shatters that story, people experience 'futurelessness.' Pastoral care, therefore, involves helping people reconstruct a hopeful, God-centered future story.

4. Practical Application in Ministry

For pastors, counselors, and believers: 1. Listen for future stories — Understand how individuals imagine their future. 2. Identify signs of futurelessness — Hopelessness, loss of motivation, despair. 3. Reframe with God's promises — Replace fear-driven narratives with Scripture-based hope. 4. Walk alongside — Encourage actions today that align with a hopeful tomorrow.

5. Spiritual Reflection

Lester's theology of hope echoes the biblical truth that our ultimate expectation is anchored in God's unchanging nature and promises. To embrace hope is to look forward with confidence, trusting that God is already in the future working all things together for good.

6. Prayer for Renewed Hope

Lord, thank You for being the Author of my future story. Where my vision has been clouded by fear or disappointment, renew my hope. Help me to see the future through the lens of Your promises. Anchor my heart in the certainty that You hold my tomorrows, and give me the courage to live today in light of that hope. Amen.